

The Inevitability of Globalized International Higher Education

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Introduction

In 2017, 5.3 million tertiary students crossed an international border to pursue an education, representing an increase of 152 percent from the 2.1 million students who pursued international education in 2001 (OECD 2019). In the U.S. alone, nearly 1.1 million international students attended American colleges and universities in 2017. Higher education as a result has become a vital American export, generating \$45 billion in revenue, more than double the amount nine years ago (IIE 2019). While growth in global tertiary student mobility may be slowing, or even declining slightly in the U.S. (Fischer 2017; Larmer 2019), the global international education marketplace remains an impressive force in higher education.

Internationalization has traditionally referred to the international activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) such as study abroad, area studies, and foreign languages (Altbach and Knight 2007). Globalization, meanwhile, is a discursive system driven by neoliberal ideals of market-driven policies implemented by governments and international capital (Olssen, Codd, and O'Neill 2004). A poststructural understanding of discourse allows for the analysis of how power is exercised and practiced in our society, and it allows for a historical examination of how individuals and collectives are shaped discursively through the ongoing production of truth (Foucault 1980). The relationship between the discourse of internationalization in higher education and the neoliberal discourse of globalization as a disciplining cultural and economic force in our society continues to be an important area of focus for educational studies (Knight 2003). It has prompted calls by scholars from a variety of academic disciplines for more elaborate approaches to understanding the impact and influence of globalization discourses and practices in contemporary international higher education (Marginson 2011).

Framed around Foucault's argument that we need a historical awareness of our present circumstances (Foucault 1982), my study develops a genealogy of internationalization at three tiers of analysis: at the macro level, where 'globalization' operates as a governing discourse within policies and practices of national and transnational governmental organizations; at the mezzo level, where 'internationalization' operates as a governing discourse among HEIs and professional higher education associations; and, at the micro level, where the discourses of globalization and internationalization work in concert to govern the conduct of international students.

Analytical Framework

I use governmentality to frame my exploration of these three levels of globalization and internationalization discourses. Governmentality, derived from Foucault's work on liberalism, allows for an investigation of the routine and mundane techniques that are involved in the governing of every day economic and social life (Rose, O'Malley, and Valverde 2006). Governmentality studies allows the researcher to problematize and destabilize existing understandings, assumptions, and taken-for-granted truths (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016). It also allows researchers to conceive of government that originates outside the state-governmental apparatus. Thus, governmentality studies allows

for shifting policy analysis away from its focus on the centrality of the state and toward the conduct of individuals and/or collectives (Miller and Rose 1990). Governmentality has allowed me to conceptualize globalization as both a regime of truth and a normalizing discourse as it relates to the discourse of internationalization. It allows for a problematization of conventional readings of globalization as a ‘natural’ set of processes or a macro-level set of external forces, allowing the researcher to analyze how globalization has come to be seen as both a problem and a solution for nation-states, institutions, and individuals (Larner and Walters 2004).

Methods

At the macro level, I analyze the policies and discourses of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), including legally binding international policy agreements, positioning papers, and reports generated by the OCED, World Bank, World Trade Organization, and UNESCO. Through an understanding of governmentality, I examine how IGOs have shaped educational governance policies to, one, shift education away from state control and into private interests, and two, to create a system where self-governing individuals and collectives act and behave in particular economic ways. **At the mezzo level**, I analyze the discourses reflected in positioning papers of prominent higher educational professional associations (HEPAs) from the late 1980s that first problematized international studies in U.S. higher education. My analysis concentrates on a series of surveys, reports, and working papers developed by the American Council on Education (ACE) and NAFSA between the period 1988 to 2017. Through an understanding of governmentality, I examine how ACE and NAFSA have come to shape and transform the discourse of internationalization in American higher education while also being shaped themselves by neoliberal discourses of globalization. **At the micro tier**, I draw upon various poststructural approaches in existing literature to develop a conceptual framework around governmentality for analyzing the discourses and practices that have contributed to international student mobility as a facet of internationalization and globalization and the imbalances often created as a result. While Foucault’s concept of power/knowledge may account for the power of discourse to “speak students into being” (Koehne 2006, 242), we should account for students to desire status, knowledge, and power in the development of their own subjectivities. Governmentality studies can provide a framework for examining existing studies and media reports for how the international student has “bought into” the neoliberal model of complete individualization as their best hope for educational achievement and economic success (Sidhu 2006).

Preliminary and Expected Findings

While international education has been around for decades and international scholarship has been around for centuries, what we are witnessing today is something different and something that did not happen naturally and without agents. It is not enough to say that internationalization is simply “swept up in globalization” (Marginson and van der Wende 2007). The discourse of internationalization and international higher education practices have been profoundly impacted and influenced by the discourses and practices of neoliberal globalization, which emphasize a departure from public good solutions to societal concerns in favor of private sector and market-driven approaches.

This transformation in internationalization discourse has restructured power relations from formal to informal techniques of government, a “neoliberal governmentality” (Lemke 2002), where what was once understood as social now rests within the domain of self-governance (Hamann 2009). A genealogy of internationalization at these three different tiers of analysis helps to problematize higher education within the context of globalization, which, at the macro level, has rationalized a globally-structured agenda for market-driven, deregulated higher education (Shields 2013), and has allowed for its implementation to take place at both the institutional as well as the individual level.

Contribution to the Field

There exist continued calls to critically investigate the normalized visions, foci, goals, and strategies of internationalization in higher education (Altbach and Knight 2007; Shields 2013). There also exist legitimate humanitarian concerns related to international student mobility due to political volatility and changing priorities of national and regional governments (Kim 2009).

By examining internationalization at these three levels of analysis—micro, mezzo, and macro—my study will help to better understand the operation of complex power relationships in international higher education. Creating a genealogical study of knowledge production, disciplining discourses, and governing practices that exist at the macro, mezzo, and micro levels of internationalization will challenge commonly held preconceptions within the field. It will also offer new ways of understanding international student subjectivity, the effects of privatization and marketization on HEIs, and the global forces and power imbalances that have come to shape today’s understandings of international education.

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